

This November, I was pleased to sign into law the Centennial of Flight Commemoration Act, which establishes a commission to coordinate the celebration in 2003 of the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight. The commission's activities will raise public awareness of the enormous contributions of the Wright brothers to human progress; remind the world of the triumph of American ingenuity, inventiveness, and diligence in developing new technologies; and inspire all Americans to recognize that the daring, creativity, and spirit of adventure reflected in the achievement of the Wright brothers will be crucial to the success of our Nation in the 21st century.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 169), has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 1998, as Wright Brothers Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 21, 1998]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 22.

Executive Order 13109—Half-Day Closing of Executive Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government on Thursday, December 24, 1998
December 17, 1998

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the

United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall be closed and their employees excused from duty for the last half of the scheduled workday on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1998, except as provided in section 2 below.

Sec. 2. The heads of executive departments and agencies may determine that certain offices and installations of their organizations, or parts thereof, must remain open and that certain employees must remain on duty for the full scheduled workday on December 24, 1998, for reasons of national security or defense or for other essential public reasons.

Sec. 3. Thursday, December 24, 1998, shall be considered as falling within the scope of Executive Order 11582 and of 5 U.S.C. 5546 and 6103(b) and other similar statutes insofar as they relate to the pay and leave of employees of the United States.

Sec. 4. This order shall apply to executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government only and is not intended to direct or otherwise implicate departments or agencies of State or local governments.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 17, 1998.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 21, 1998]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 22.

Remarks Honoring Eunice Kennedy Shriver at the Special Olympics Dinner
December 17, 1998

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you. Pretty rowdy crowd tonight. [Laughter] I am delighted to join Hillary in welcoming all of you here. We're delighted to have you at this remarkable celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Special Olympics.

Let me say just for a moment, I am also thinking tonight about the brave American men and women in uniform who are carrying out our mission in Iraq with our British allies.

I know that our thoughts and our prayers, indeed, those of all the American people, are with them tonight. And I wanted to say that what they are doing is important. It will make the world a safer, more peaceful place for our children in the 21st century.

I'd also like to say a word now about the Special Olympics. More than 30 years ago Eunice Kennedy Shriver had an idea as simple as it was revolutionary, to give young people with disabilities the chance to know the thrill of athletic competition, the joy of participation, the pride of accomplishment. Out of that powerful idea, dreamed up at a kitchen table and launched at a backyard in Rockville, Maryland, Special Olympics grew and grew and grew.

Just think of it—if you can remember back to the time before the Special Olympics, many people actually believed that people with disabilities were incapable of performing the most basic, every day activities, let alone competing in sports. But this year, 30 years later, there are more than one million Special Olympic athletes throwing the javelin, swimming the 500-meter butterfly, walking the balance beam—something most of the rest of us cannot do—[laughter]—and inspiring hope all over the world.

So tonight I ask all of you to stand and join me in toasting Eunice Kennedy Shriver; her wonderful family, who have supported her every step of the way; to all the people who work so hard year-in and year-out to make Special Olympics possible, and to the athletes who are an inspiration to us all; to Eunice Kennedy Shriver and the Special Olympics. Ladies and gentlemen, Eunice Shriver.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8 p.m. in a pavilion on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder, Special Olympics. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Remarks at the Conclusion of the Special Olympics Dinner

December 17, 1998

Thank you. This has been a wonderful night. Hillary and I want to thank all the artists who have graced this stage. They have brought something special to this part of the White House lawn and this beautiful tent that we've never had before. They certainly have helped to put us all in the holiday spirit, including our good friend, Whoopi, who I thought was terrific tonight, even in the breaks.

I feel very proud to be a part of this special evening, to pay tribute to Special Olympics. Tonight we celebrate 30 years of breaking down barriers and building up hope, 30 years of widening the circle of opportunity, 30 years of helping Americans with disabilities to reach their highest potential. Tonight we celebrate the victory of the human spirit. We see the power of that spirit every single time an athlete like Loretta runs a race, every time a young person realizes the wonder that he can swim faster than almost anybody else in the pool, every time a parent's heart fills with pride as her child steps with confidence onto the winner's block, and every time a volunteer learns the joy of helping people with disabilities to make the most of their abilities.

As Special Olympics enters its fourth decade, this legacy is being passed from generation to generation, in a circle of hope, as the children of Special Olympics volunteers take their place in the dugouts and on the sidelines and as former competitors become coaches and mentors to new young athletes. The Special Olympics torch, which began as a small flicker of light in 1968 in Chicago, now burns brightly all around the world as a symbol of acceptance and pride.

Tonight, we thank all of you, every single one of you who have made this possible: the Shriver and Kennedy families, without whose vision there would be no Special Olympics; the thousands of supporters and volunteers whose dedication sustains that vision; the